

Letter and enclosure from John Ramsey Graham to Alexander Graham Bell, November 26, 1897

9 Elwood Building, Rochester, N. Y. Nov. 26, 1897, Alexander Graham Bell, Esq., Cape Breton N. S.

Dear Sir: Your favor of 21st in answer to my letter of 4th inst. at hand. Am pleased to hear that you are testing the question of aerial navigation, as you have the financial resources as well the skill to carry the work along until you reach a successful conclusion. Not being so circumstanced I must let my plan rest until better able to experiment, or some who is takes hold of it, in which case I might be allowed a moderate interest, say 1-10th, by the party who stood the necessary expense of experimentation and patenting. Have not asked anyone yet to do anything in the matter because there is no use in broaching the subject of aerial navigation to the average capitalist or mechanical expert.

Mr. Maxim, by the inclosed clipping, seems to have also concluded that balloon buoyancy cannot well be dispensed with—in fact he is relying upon it to what seems a very hazardous extent. His way as now announced is very direct, and barring accidents he may make his proposed trip successfully. You could of course obtain a detailed description of his machine by wire if you cared to.

It would not take you over two minutes after looking at my plan to decide whether or not it was worth an experiment. If I happened to be in your locality I might be able to satisfy you as to its practicability. There are some things, like the pneumatic lock to be built on the Erie canal this winter that may be set down as feasible in advance of construction. If I could take an active part in bringing out a successful air ship it would be a great pleasure to do so, but my means are now too limited to warrant in going to expense in that direction, although I am at present practically foot loose so far as business is concerned.

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Mr. Maxim seems to have a very heavy engine for 16 horse power if the telegram figures are correct, but they are probably incorrect. Hoping you may be the first in the field I remain

Vey Truly Yours John Ramsey Graham

AERIAL NAVIGATION. Maxim Promises to Take a Party to the Klondike.

San Francisco, Nov. 25.—Hiram S. Maxim, superintendent of construction of the Atlantic & Pacific Aerial Navigation Company, announces that the company has now in course of construction an airship in which it is expected to make the trip to the Klondike. He said:

“When everything is on board the ship will weigh 5,000 pounds, and we shall take on board about one ton weight of passengers and provisions. The gas space occupied will be 106,000 cubic feet. The propelling power will be a sixteen horse-power naphtha engine, which will be made out of aluminum as far as that metal can be used, and will weigh complete 900 pounds. The gasoline will be stored in tanks which will contain a sufficient quantity to drive the vessel around the earth without replenishing the tanks. The skin of the ship will be double and the intermediate space will be filled with hydrogen gas. This gas will be confined in separate compartments and will be in the upper part of the cylinder and in the cones.”